

[Joe Poeffel]

[??] S241[??]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Eilert Mohlman ADDRESS Columbus, Nebr.

DATE Nov. 30, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

1. Name and address of informant Joe Poeffel, Columbus, Nebr.

2. Date and time of interview Nov. 29, 1938 10-12 A.M.

3. Place of interview At his home

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant No one

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you No one

6. Description of room, house surroundings, etc. Kitchen, house moderately furnished and located on edge of town, surroundings neatly kept— with garden space. [???

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Eilert Mohlman ADDRESS Columbus, Nebr.

DATE Nov. 30, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Joe Poeffel, Columbus, Nebr.

1. Ancestry German-Austrian

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2. Place and date of birth Deutchausen, Austria, June 24, 1866.
3. Family Wife — 6 children
4. Place lived in, with dates Austria 1866-1879; Platto Co. farm, 1879-1918; City of Columbus 1918 to date.
5. Education, with dates Country schools 1872-1881
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Farm hand and farmer 1884-[1918?]
7. Special skills and interests General farming and stock raising
8. Community and religious activities Member Catholic Church; School director for a number of years.
9. Description of informant Medium build; height 58 9"; 160#
10. Other points gained in interview Now retired and enjoys his daily visits among old friends. One daughter still living with them at home.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Eilert Mohlman ADDRESS Columbus, Neb.

DATE Nov. 30, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Joe Poeffel, Columbus, Nebraska

We had a small farm near Deutchausen, in Austria, and when I was about ten years old I had to help with the farm work, herd cattle, haul wood out of the timber. We farmed with oxen those days, and when there was a lot of field work to do we used to hitch up a cow with them but it was slow work. We did not raise very much small grain and we did our

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threshing with a “flail”, which is a long stick with another stick or club fastened on the end, the grain was loose and was laid on boards and with the flail we pounded out the grain.

My father was anxious to come to America, but he did not want to take my mother or any of us along, saying that it would be too wild a country and that there were too many Indians here that we might get killed.

He then started out alone to this country in 1877, he worked as a hired farm hand and also did some carpenter work around, and bought a homestead from another man, paying \$1.00 an acre for it and he proved up on it. He then sent for us in 1879, my mother, one brother and two sisters. We came direct to Columbus and I remember my father met us at the train with a pair of oxen hitched to a lumber wagon and we kids sat on a board in the wagon box, and it took us a long time to get home from Columbus.

We lived in three different sod houses for about ten years. The first one was near a creek and one time a big rain storm came up and the water got so high that it came through the door and windows of our sod house, the furniture that we had was swimming around in the house; we had to run to the granary and there was high water on both sides of it so we could not get out and had to stay there until the water went down the next afternoon. We lost a lot of chickens and sixteen head of hogs that weighed 200 pounds a piece. The water had ruined our sod house so that it caved in the next day and then we had to build a new one, which we made of square blocks of prairie laid together like our cement blocks are now and smoothed on the inside with mortar that was made of sticky mud, we would whitewash the inside walls to make it look nice; it was warm in the house in winter time and pretty cool in the summer time.

When I was still at [home?] we did not have much money, we would make our own coffee by roasting barley in the oven; we used this kind of coffee for about ten years. Coffee cost about sixty cents a pound and when we used it, it would be as a special treat on Sundays. [? Coffee?]

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I herded cattle away from home for two summers for which I was paid \$18 for the season; worked as a hired man on the farm for three years and helped at home until I was twenty-nine years old when I got married. Then got 80 acres of land from my father and started farming for myself.

In the year of 1880, about the middle of October, we had one of the worst blizzards that I remember of, it lasted for three days and three nights. I was working out at that time; our barn was just about under, we had to start shoveling snow on the roof so that we could get into the barn to milk the cows. We would have to hitch four mules to the hayrack to get half a load of hay for the cattle. We had a blizzard about three times a week that winter and it got to 35 below zero.

The next spring about the middle of April, when the wheat and oats were all sowed, we had another three day blizzard and everything froze. It was one of the coldest winters I ever went through.